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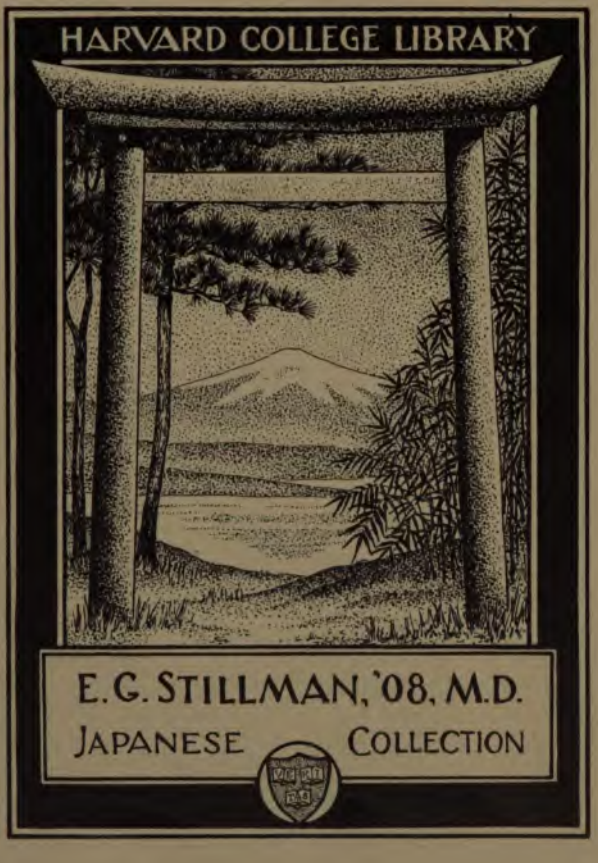
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MOSQUITE SETS TO; OR, WOMAN'S SACRIFICE

BY

FENTARO KANUTO

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MOSUME SETS YO; OR, WOMAN'S SACRIFICE

BY

KENTARO KANEKO

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MOSUME SETS YO; OR, WOMAN'S SACRIFICE[1]

(The plot of the following tale is based upon that of a well-known Japanese novel. In offering this pathetic story to the readers of the "Atlantic," the Editors feel that they could not recast the occasionally quaint English of their Japanese contributor without depriving it of a peculiar charm.)

IN the prosperous period of the Tycoon administration Yedo was considered as the center of the Japanese civilization; thither flocked all classes of the people from every quarter; and the Tycoon was surrounded by the brilliancy of Oriental luxury and the splendor of the feudal system. Among his favorites there was a baronet by the name of Hidaka, who had two sons, the elder Bunzero, the younger Kotaro. By the custom of primogeniture Bunzero was to inherit all the family property—title

[1] Published in the "Atlantic Monthly," May, 1878.

as well as estate—on his succeeding his father, who had thought of retiring from an active duty of baronetcy, which, according to the customary law, imposed upon a baronet an obligation to attend the Tycoon's court. Bunzero had been for some time attached to a maiden of inferior rank; he asked the baronet to permit him to marry her, but the father, being proud of his family name, was much displeased by this proposal, and told his son that he must either abandon the low marriage or forfeit the right of succession.

In spite of his father, Bunzero married the woman of his choice, left the paternal roof, and went to Osaka, the largest commercial city of that day, where he lived with his wife in a humble cottage, and made a livelihood by teaching the children of the district, soon becoming quite rich by his untiring industry. Although unfriended and cast out from home, they set forth on the journey of life with the brightest hopes. Soon after a son was born to them, whom they named Kenzero, and to whom they were attached by the strongest affection, regarding him as the source of future happiness.

In their neighborhood there lived a poor tradesman who had just lost his wife, and could not support himself and his little girl, Sumie, on account of poverty and sickness. Bunzero, moved by pity toward this helpless girl, took her into his family and brought her

up as if she were a child of his own. Although he had forfeited his rank, Bunzero did not stifle a feeling of ancient pride that he had been once the sole heir to nobility. He now hoped that his son Kenzero would some time or other distinguish himself and wipe off the disgrace that he had brought upon the family name; therefore he educated Kenzero with the utmost care. Kenzero, by his marvelous aptitude for learning, soon distinguished himself, and became the leading youth in the school. His noble and dignified countenance, which showed that he was descended from a noble family, and his easy grace of manner gained him many admirers.

Sumie, though born of a peasant family, was endowed with unrivaled beauty, which well accorded with her gentle and charming manner; her natural talent for music was shown even in her infancy. Growing up under the same roof as brother and sister, they shared each other's joy and grief; their fondness grew stronger and stronger as they advanced in years, and each vowed in heart and soul to be a life partner of the other.

One morning, Bunzero, coming into Kenzero's study with a letter in his hand, said, "I have received joyful tidings from Yedo."

"What is it, father?" asked Kenzero.

"The time has come!" exclaimed the father, with

a flush of triumph and gladness. "Here is a letter from my father in Yedo, offering his forgiveness for my past offense, and asking me if I can spare you. As you know, I am dead in the eye of the law, by my forfeiture; I cannot succeed to the family estate; but as you are a son of the true heir of the Hidaka family, you have some claim to the estate, if you can only be adopted by my father's house. What do you suppose is my father's intention? It is to adopt you in my brother's family, who succeeded me after my disappearance. There is a messenger coming from Yedo in a few days to receive our answer, and if we agree before he arrives you are to go to the capital at once. To obtain this was my ambition and my hope for you. For this purpose I gave you the best education possible, and now the time has come for you to take off the disgrace from the name of your father." So delighted was Bunzero that his voice trembled with joy, and his face brightened with ecstasy.

Kenzero was surprised at this unexpected news, and said triumphantly, "Now, sir, the way to the world and honor is open to me." A flush came immediately up to his face, and his eyes glistened with delight. Suddenly he turned his face away from the father, and wrung his hands as if in grief; he thought that he must part with Sumie, his long-wished-for bride.

"What is it, my dear boy? What ails you?" asked the father, bending over his son with anxious looks.

"No—nothing—sir," stammered the son; "but—but—I must leave you and"—here the name Sumie trembled on his lips, but he suppressed it with a sigh. "I must now renounce my duty toward you, and leave you alone with Sumie."

"Oh, do not think of me," said the father, "for I am legally dead, and have none but a moral claim on you. I am only too happy to make any sacrifice for the welfare of my only son." Kenzero, who had all the while remained silent, with downcast eyes, now looked up to his father's face with an expression of mingled joy and grief; and the father continued: "Now you are to be adopted in another family, and perhaps you know already the customary law of such adoption; but as this is our last interview as father and son, let me say a few words:

"When you are adopted, you must renounce all your home duties and rights, and honor your adoptive parents more than your own; for the maxim tells us, 'The first is the adopted, and the second is the natural.' Your natural father has no claim to your person after the adoption. When you go into my brother's family, regard him as a father, though an uncle in reality; obey his commands, and let me hear that you have shown yourself worthy of my affection. As I

shall live forever in retirement, and never be in the glare of worldly splendor, so I trust that you will remember my last words, and be a credit to the name of Hidaka. After you are gone I shall give all my property to Sumie, who was, as you know, left helpless, and has been brought up as one of my family. I once thought of concluding your betrothal with her, but as you have a higher hope and a brighter future her inferior birth might hinder your succession to a noble family; therefore I shall marry her to some tradesman, with the settlement of my property upon her." Kenzero's countenance suddenly turned ghastly pale, and he sat with folded arms, speechless and motionless. In his troubled mind duty and love struggled to conquer, and one could almost hear the beating of his heart; but at last he sacrificed love to duty. He assented to his father's proposal, and returned to his room to prepare for his journey, sorrowful and reluctant.

Sumie received the tidings as sadly as Kenzero, but she concealed from the world the sufferings of her heart, and brooded constantly over her future destiny and her unfortunate life. She looked sad and gloomy.

Her sleep was haunted by melancholy dreams. She soon became helpless and exhausted; she finally shut herself up in her own chamber, and refused to be either cheered or comforted. As soon as he had fin-

ished his preparations, Kenzero hastened to Sumie's room and opened the paper slide, and saw her leaning on her couch and supporting her head on her hand, as if utterly destitute of strength; her vacant gaze showed her total insensibility to his presence. Kenzero, approaching near her, said softly, "Do you feel better than yesterday?"

At the sound of his voice she looked up, and said, with a sad smile, "No, about the same as yesterday"; and she sank again into her former state of unconsciousness.

"If you shut yourself up in this closed room you will only feel worse. Come out into the garden. The weather is mild and pleasant, and the cherry-trees are in full bloom; it will do you good to take the fresh air. Do not brood so, but try to look for some happier future," said Kenzero, in order to divert her thought.

"How can I cease to think of our cruel separation? When I learned the history of my misery and destitution, I wept bitterly at the thought that I was an orphan; but as you had always pitied my miserable lot, and sympathized with me in my sorrow, so I had in you a master, the light of life, and the source of future happiness.

"Now you are going away to Yedo, and such a long distance will lie between us; and perhaps we shall never see each other again."

As she finished the sentence, she covered her face with her hands and wept.

"Do not take it so sorely. If you could only know the anguish of my heart. Duty and love! The weight of duty always turns the scale in its favor. But my love for you shall know no change. After my arrival at Yedo I will at once send for you, and introduce you as one of the family; but if I cannot accomplish this, we can hope and wait for the time when I succeed to the family estate and everything is at my disposal; then our union will be happily consummated, and without fear we can brave the world together."

He then persuaded her to take a walk around the garden. It was near twilight; the last rays of the setting sun were gleaming through the thick foliage and the blooming branches, beneath which slowly rambled the youth and maiden. Their thoughts were wrapped in joy and happiness for the future; their sweet whispers were often interrupted by the enchanting melody of the nightingale; their forms were sometimes lost in the gloom of the gathering night.

On the morning of his departure they all gathered around the gate to see Kenzero off. Sumie's heart was too full to admit of saying more than a simple "Good-by"; she gave him an affectionate yet melancholy look, and lowered her head to conceal her tears. Kenzero could neither speak nor exchange a glance of

parting with her, but only cast a farewell look on the little group clustered around the gate, and suddenly turned his face and proceeded on his journey.

At the turn of the road he looked back toward the house, and saw Sumie standing alone. When she perceived Kenzero turn, she waved her hand with cheering nods and mingled emotions of sorrow and despair.

She waited some time, but no letter came from Yedo. As the days rolled away in this dreadful suspense she grew anxious, impatient, and at last hopeless. Her anguish was uncontrollable; she gave way to her grief, and wept like a forsaken child.

"Have you changed so soon?" cried she, in agony. "Has your promise evaporated into nothing? Kenzero, O Kenzero, this is too unmerciful to bear!" She raised her head, flung back her disheveled hair, and shuddered at the changed appearance of her own face, once so fair and beautiful. As she sat alone by a dim, flickering lamp, which made her confused mind more despondent, she heard a voice from outside calling distinctly, "Sumie, Sumie!"

She sprang up and opened the window, asking, in a trembling voice, "Who is there?" No answer came but the echo of her own words. She leaned exhausted on the window-sill, and looked up to the vast and peaceful firmament studded by myriads of brilliant stars, and she wondered why her life could be so sad

and gloomy while everything around her was so calm and undisturbed. She sang in a plaintive tone; and the sorrowful melody was wafted on the midnight air, and lost among the rustling of the leaves. Again she starts from a profound melancholy, and looks out with a frightened gaze.

"Am I dreaming?" she wondered. "No; I heard it again distinctly. 'T is the voice of a pleading angel calling me to the Blessed Isle. Yes, yes, anon I come." And she jumps from the window, holding in one hand her tangled hair, and in the other the fold of her long robe. She runs blindly toward the bank of the Yodo River, while a flock of ravens flap their wings and croak over her head as if to chant her funeral dirge. She now stands on a bridge, gazing on the furious stream below, and wondering whether beneath the frowning waves there lies the tranquil shore of a "land of rest." "O God, deliver me from sorrow!" she prayed tremblingly; "take me anywhere out of this unmerciful world." She then plunged headlong into the rushing current, and a midnight bell from a distant pagoda tolled forth, as if ringing the knell of one so young, so beautiful, so good. The moon had just waned behind the western hills, and a mysterious darkness dropped like a curtain over the scene of desolation.

This sudden disappearance of Sumie startled Bun-

zero and his neighbors. They at once began to search for her; they sent the detectives to every place of concealment, and they dragged the river, but no trace of her could be found. To the memory of this unfortunate girl he erected a tomb in the burying-ground of her ancestors, and fixing the day of her disappearance as the date of her death, he offered prayers for her departed soul.

Kenzero was cordially received by his uncle's family, which consisted of his grandfather, a retired noble, his adoptive parents, and their only daughter Eukie.

The intention of the family was soon told: they wished to marry Kenzero to Eukie, and thus enable both the heirs of Bunzero and Kotaro to participate in the fortune and estate of the family, this being the general practice in the case of adoption.

Eukie is now on the verge of womanhood: she is gentle in manner and graceful in movement; her heart is free from selfishness and conceit; she has a certain air of innocence and inexperience which makes her extremely charming. In her personal beauty she was not surpassed by Sumie. The latter was sagacious and intellectual; the former was amiable and graceful. Kenzero was much troubled. If he did not follow the intentions of his parents, he would violate filial duty toward the family.

If he did, he would break his parting promise to Sumie, whose very existence depended on that one hope, and he might ruin forever the peace and happiness of that unfortunate maiden. But the adoption was already recorded in the office of the Tycoon's council, and there was no other way to avoid the difficulties except to wait for his succession to the family estate; until then he must refuse to marry Eukie on some ground. Should he tell them of Sumie? No; her inferior birth would be a decisive objection, and the very fact of his engagement with her might cause his disinheritance, and he might meet again the fate of his poor father. Once he thought of sending Sumie a letter, to acquaint her with his present circumstances.

But he feared the idea of the intended matrimony would be a fatal blow to her; so he decided not to write to her until he ascertained the time of his succession. As Kenzero sat alone, careworn and exhausted, thinking of Sumie and her anxiety consequent upon his long silence, his uncle stepped into the room, and, delivering a despatch, said with an air of coldness:

"It has a seal of mourning; open and see." The sight chilled Kenzero to the heart; he remained speechless for a moment, gazing upon the letter, which still lay unopened in his trembling hand.

"It is not your father?" persisted the baronet. By this time Kenzero, slowly recovering his strength, opened the letter; it was the announcement of Sumie's disappearance. He sank helpless into his seat, and turned deadly pale. Once or twice his lips moved as if to utter the words, "I have killed her." His heart swelled into his throat, and notwithstanding the presence of his adoptive father, the tears rolled down on his cheeks.

"Whose death is it?" asked the baronet, anxiously.

"Only that of a member of my father's family, sir," answered Kenzero, with affected coldness; but his heart rebuked him for assuming this indifference to the death of Sumie,—the love of other days and the hope of future years. After the reception of this sad news he seemed always wrapped in deep, melancholy thought, and became quite unconscious of his friends and surroundings. Though he often mingled in the pleasures of Yedo, and frequented tea-houses with his companions, yet his face, which now bore deep lines of sorrow, was never seen to smile.

On the day of the summer festival, Kenzero went with some friends to a certain tea-house to see the procession of the geisha, the female musicians. While the first part of the procession was passing by, Kenzero was leaning over the balcony and gazing absently on the promiscuous crowd below, half uncon-

scious of the surrounding gaiety. Suddenly deafening cheers roused Kenzero from his somber reverie, and he glanced dreamily at the moving procession; his eyes fell upon a female figure, and he turned pale, and he seemed stricken motionless.

This female was Sumie, who was supposed to have drowned herself in the Yodo, and whose reported death had ruined the peace of Kenzero's mind. Amazed at the sudden resurrection of the dead, he surveyed her figure with wild perplexity. She wore gay, brilliant apparel, with an embroidered figure of dragons coiling through a cloud, and her hair was dressed in the manner of the geisha. The figure, slowly moving beneath the balcony, filled Kenzero with mystery and awe, and it was at last lost in a thick cloud of dust, leaving him speechless and insensible. As soon as his friends left the room, Kenzero went to the proprietor of the tea-house and asked:

"Do you know that geisha who was so heartily greeted by the people?"

"She is from Osaka, sir," replied the proprietor, "and to-day is her first appearance."

"Do you think I can in any way see her after the procession is over?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I know her master well; I will ask him to send her here after the procession." So saying the proprietor left the room, with many bows and

assurances, and Kenzero was once more left alone to reflect upon the unexpected incident and its probable cause.

Soon a light step is heard in a long corridor; nearer and nearer it comes; now it climbs the stairs. With gay spirit and smiling face she comes into the room; but no sooner has she perceived Kenzero than she starts, she staggers back in astonishment, she turns deadly pale, fixing her eyes on his face, which is flushed with anger. Trembling and stammering, she turns from him and falls to the floor.

Kenzero strode boldly to her, and said calmly, but scornfully:

"What a shameful meeting! Sumie, how can you endure so base a life as this?"

Sumie rushed toward him, saying, "Forgive me!" but she was stopped by the wave of his hand. She knelt before him, with her hands clasped on her breast, and cried: "It is reasonable that you should think so; but let me explain the cause of my misery. Do not rebuke me, but hear—" She was interrupted by Kenzero, who gave a glance of reproach which made her tremble.

"This slavish appearance of my—future bride!" said he, angrily. "I cannot hear you! No more of your explanations!"

"But wait, my lord," said she, confusedly. "I live

this slavish life for the love I cherish for one whose name I dare not breathe now."

"Stop! I will hear no more of that," interrupted Kenzero. "How could you leave my father, when he brought you up from your helpless state, and now depends on you for the support of his old age? Oh, you shameless girl, enticed away from home by wicked wretches, and sold into this quarter!"

"Oh, judge not before you hear," pleaded Sumie; "however disgraced I may be now, have pity on me for my sufferings' sake." She raised herself from the floor and stood before Kenzero, and seizing his sleeves, looked up to him with tearful eyes. "Do you remember your promise? How long did I hope and wait for your letter, but, alas! all in vain. One night I heard a voice calling my name. I went out and asked who it was, thinking perhaps it might be you; but no one was there, and I thought it must be a voice from another world, calling me to rest. In that state of mind I determined to drown myself in the river, and leave this unmerciful world. I started from home and went to the bridge, whence, as I cast one farewell glance on the glimmering light of this world, I saw a bright star of heaven reflected in the water, and it showed me where my 'happy home' was. I plunged in, while my lips repeated your name. After that I remember nothing until, as I opened my eyes and

glanced dreamily about me, I saw a group of dreadful ruffians.

"Oh, I shall never forget that sight! I tremble at the thought of it. Seeing such men about me, I fainted away; but on opening my eyes again I found myself supported by one ruffian, while another was holding a cup of water. Terrified by the sight, I closed my eyes, and when I peeped through I saw five ruffians, in rags, sitting cross-legged around the dim light of a camp-fire. I then heard one cry out, 'I was the first who heard the splash of water, and discovered this girl floating in the river; so I have the right to her!' Then, smoothing my hands, he said in an affected tone of sympathy, 'Unfortunate maiden, as you have gained your life by my help, may I ask you to be mine? But if you refuse—' Here he stopped short and looked full into my eyes, as if to impress strongly upon my mind what he was about to say. 'In case of your refusal,' continued he, 'we must sell you as a geisha. Which will you do? Come, fair maiden, to my house and live with me.' The alternative was before me, and there was disgrace in both; but I thought to myself that if I must live and suffer more I had rather be sold in the Musician's quarter of Yedo, where perhaps I might see you, and then I should tell you all the miseries I had suffered for you. So I said, 'Sell me, but I will not marry you.'

At this my suitor flung away my hands and gave me one furious glance, while the rest cried out, 'Decided.' Having failed in the attempt at self-destruction, I came here to seek for you, whom I once loved, but now dare not love, for I have disgraced you by this slavish state. For the reward of my love and sufferings, I only ask your forgiveness."

Kenzero, lying on a couch, remained silent, and did not heed what she had said.

Sumie took his hands and implored him: "Say you forgive me. Forgiveness is all I now ask." But Kenzero still. remained speechless and motionless. Sumie rose with a flush of anger.

"There is a limit to woman's patience," she said tremblingly. "I waited—suffered for you; but you have, notwithstanding, broken your promise. You have deceived and deserted me. Are women made to be treated so unmercifully? Are men so stubborn and unable to read the heart of a true woman? I lived in the hope of meeting you, and now that I see you, it is worse than the worst I feared. Oh, Kenzero, how can you be so cruel!"

She turned to descend the stairs, but Kenzero suddenly seized her, and said in a melancholy tone: "Are we to forget each other forever, and endure the anguish of our hearts for nothing? Say no more of forgiveness. It is I who ought to ask your forgive-

ness. As vile as you are now, I love you more, for it is your love which brought you to this misfortune and disgrace. It is my fault—my fault!" And he told her of his unfortunate situation in his adoptive family, and the cause of his long silence.

He now determined to redeem her from her master, but as he had not succeeded to the family title he had not sufficient means to execute his intention; therefore he only continued his visits to Sumie with her master's permission. When the master learned from Kenzero of his relation to Sumie, he was moved by the affecting story of their sufferings and he consented to the proposal of their immediate marriage; moreover, he told Kenzero to pay the redemption money on his succession to the family estate. The marriage ceremony took place at the master's house, but without the consent of the adoptive family; for Kenzero feared that they would object to the union, and he intended, after his succession, to introduce her to the family as his wife.

After their marriage, Kenzero bought for Sumie a small cottage on the banks of the Sumida, where she lived in a quiet manner with her attendant maid. The cottage was situated on the shore, a short distance from the road, and surrounded by bamboo hedges exquisitely trimmed. The path, bordered with various Oriental flowers, winds through the garden to the

arched portal, from which hangs the morning-glory with its delicate tendrils. On one side of the garden there rises an artificial embankment, with trim shrubberies and mossy sides, and on its top a small temple of the household god is seen through the green of pines and hemlocks. On the other side are dwarfed trees, artificial streams, and large trunks of trees overrun with ivy and fern arranged with skill and taste. The piazza commands the whole view of the river, whose right bank is covered by a row of pretty houses, with pretty balconies, and neat steps leading to the water, where numerous "roofed boats" are rocking at their moorage; on the left, there is a famous orchard of cherry-trees. A long path, with a row of trees on either side, extends the whole length of the bank; the branches meeting at the top form one continuous arch. When the cherry-trees are in full blossom, one walking beneath this deep and flowery bower can hardly see the sky. The surrounding atmosphere is filled with fragrance, and the place itself is so charming, so unlike any other earthly scene, that it reminds one of the descriptions of fairyland.

After Sumie's removal to the Sumida, Kenzero spent a greater part of his time there; thus he neglected his home duties, and showed slight attention to his intended bride. Months had rolled by without causing any serious effect in the family; but when

there was a baby born on the Sumida, Kenzero's absence and his cool treatment toward "the daughter of the house" became so marked that the family, for the first time, felt suspicious of his mysterious conduct. Kenzero was a favorite of his grandfather, whose influence was still felt in the domestic affairs, although he had long since retired. His interest and affection for his grandson made him fear that, although in his lifetime there would be no change in the family, after his death they might disinherit Kenzero, if his present behavior continued; therefore he determined to search for Kenzero's secret, and arrange the affair himself. When he made inquiry, he was informed that Kenzero was engaged to Sumie, a singing-girl on the Sumida. He was shocked by such unwarrantable conduct in his grandson, and hastened at once to see the woman and solve the difficulty. It was a May afternoon; the weather was mild, and the broad surface of the river was here and there disturbed by calm ripples.

Sumie was clad in her flowing gown with loose sleeves; with the child in her arms, she was telling the nurse the story of her past misery. Suddenly there came a voice asking for entrance. Sumie, after bidding the nurse to take the child into the next room, opened the door, and there stood an old stranger.

"Excuse me," said the stranger; "is Miss Sumie living here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Sumie; "I am the person inquired for." The stranger bowed politely, and begged to be pardoned for the liberty he had taken in thus addressing her. A seat was soon assigned to him; but both remained silent, for she was vexed by this unexpected visit from a stranger, with whose name even she was not yet acquainted, and he did not know how to introduce the object of his call.

At last he broke silence, saying, "I do not know how to come to the point. I have attempted several times, but all in vain. I now force myself to state the object of my coming. I am Kenzero's grandfather. I do not know whether you are aware that he is an adopted son, and is to be united with the daughter of the house; but his coldness—nay, his aversion to her—made us suspect the existence of a secret engagement. I am informed that you are the one to whom he is attached. I am quite alarmed, for if this were known to his adoptive parents they might disinherit him. As I have only a few more years to live, my only hope is to see him succeed peacefully to the family fortune; but as long as his acquaintance with you continues, so long his future remains uncertain."

Here his courage failed him, and he could proceed

no further. All the while Sumie sat with downcast eyes, thinking that the fatal moment had arrived, and she must either announce her marriage with Kenzero, or resolve nevermore to see her loved husband. She thought of acknowledging the marriage; but then what would be the result? Kenzero would surely be disinherited for his secrecy and disregard of the family, and his name forever blotted from the fair pages of human record. Upon her answer hangs the fate of Kenzero: there is no other way to save him and his honor but to sacrifice herself.

"I was unaware," said she, pressing down the swelling of her heart, "that I had caused so much—alarm in your family. However, I shall hereafter renounce the honor of Kenzero's attentions. Now, for the first and last time, I beg your forgiveness."

A flood of tears rolled down on her cheeks, and, burying her face in her hands, she knelt down at the feet of the old baronet.

"Rise, madam," said he, trying to lift her; "pray rise, for you have done nothing to be forgiven. I know too well the pains of separation. It makes my heart ache when I think that I have made you break your engagement and caused all your sufferings."

"As I have no hope of happiness in the future, if my sacrifice can save Kenzero and his honor I will

gladly make it, for the love I have long cherished for him."

It was so touching to hear her, and to witness her calm resignation, that the old baronet wept, and expressing his sympathy for her sorrow, he bade her farewell.

After the visit of this mysterious stranger, the scene in the cottage assumed a very different aspect: the merriest laughter had now changed into saddest stillness and despondency, and over Sumie's beautiful face came an expression of woe and despair. As she sat alone in her own room, dreading the sorrow of her last meeting with Kenzero, she observed him standing on the threshold and wondering at the change in her.

"What ails you?" asked he, advancing toward her. "Has anything happened?" But receiving no answer he came to her, and said, while looking into her tearful eyes, "Come, come! tell me what ails you."

"Nothing," said she, dropping her head on his arm; "but I was thinking of my unfortunate condition, and I could not help—"

"I wish you would not brood over such a silly thing. Thus far we have both had a full share of sufferings; but now we are married, let us forget the story of our past miseries; and as soon as I succeed my father I will acknowledge you as my lawful wife. Therefore

until then be patient, and wait for our brighter future. Why do you talk so hopeless?" said he, bending over her tenderly. "Why do you look so strangely? Why, you perplex me! you alarm me! Does anything distress you? Come, tell me, and I will share your sorrow."

"I have nothing to tell you now; but I will inform you to-morrow," said she, while she was repeating in her mind, "To-morrow itself will inform you."

"Then, until to-morrow," said he, "do not despond so, for my sake. I will come early to-morrow morning, for I am a substitute for my father in attendance at court to-night. I must go now, so adieu." As he was turning to start on his duty, Sumie looked at him with a despairing expression, as if they were never to meet again. Kenzero was troubled; returning to her, he said, "Why do you look so sad? I will come to-morrow early. Is there anything that you wish me to do before I go?"

"Nothing particular," replied Sumie; "but somehow I feel very lonely. Stay a while, for it is not yet the fourth hour."

Kenzero returned to her side, and they are once more together.

"I often think," continued she, "that I was born to make others grieve, and my life is the representative of the saddest. How many phases of human

life are there in the world! Life resembles several streams: Some dash forth from between huge rocks, ooze through crack and crevice, and are sometimes hurled down over cataracts and waterfalls, and whirled around in a dark, fathomless basin. Calmness and tranquillity are not assigned to them; but their whole course represents a constant turmoil and disturbance, until at last they are all emptied into the ocean. Others bubble up by the hillside, and warble along sunny banks and peaceful meadows. They sometimes glide over mossy stones and beneath the cool shade of summer foliage, while their gentle murmur makes harmony with the sweet songs of skylarks.

"The roaring rivers and laughing brooks are alike hushed at last by the waves of the mysterious ocean. Likewise grief and pleasure, sorrow and happiness, are swallowed up in death—the common destiny of human life. My life is a scene of constant troubles; I live in sorrow, and so shall I die. To-night we sit together, but we know not what to-morrow will bring forth. Should I ever be called away suddenly, think of me mournfully, and pity my child for its mother's sake."

"Why do you talk always of sorrow and death?" interrupted Kenzero. "As frail as we are, and as uncertain as our life is, we must idealize a world of happiness, and hope for a brighter future. In this

transitory world there is nothing substantial, nothing to be called happiness except hope. Misfortune disperses the airy castles of imagination; sorrow breaks into the happy circle of contentment. Sadness plays as important a part as happiness in the drama of human life." Just then the bell of Asakusa struck the fourth hour of night. "It is time to go," said Kenzero, starting from his seat.

"Oh, then you must go?" said Sumie, looking at him steadfastly. "I do not know why, but I feel sad in the view of so short a separation."

"You alarm me! I do not dare to go to the court and leave you here alone."

"Pray attend the court," said she, eagerly. "For the world, I would not have you omit a duty." Her heart was full, for this was the last time she was to see him, and to-morrow she would hear him no more; but, trusting that she should meet him in the happier region, she bade him farewell.

After the whole family had retired Sumie began her preparations by dressing herself in the "white apparel," which is generally worn by one who intends to commit suicide. She wrote a long farewell letter to Kenzero; and just as the hour of midnight struck she grasped a short sword, wrapped in white cloth, all save the point about an inch in length. She raised it to thrust into her throat, but her courage failed her

at the sight of her child. She knelt at his cradle, bent over him, and embraced him again and again. The thought of leaving him alone made her tremble; she shuddered at the sight of the sharp sword before her. Weeping, sobbing, she for the last time fondly clasped him to her bosom; and as her warm tears fell upon the child's cheek he stretched out his arms, he moved, as if waking. Sumie started back and held her breath in dismay, but again the child dropped asleep.

"Oh, my dearest child!" cried she, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes. "Oh, most unfortunate one! Forever must I leave you! But I shall hover above you, and guard you against the troubles of this wicked world. Do not cry when I am gone, for I shall never return. When waking in the morning you seek a mother's smile, my lips will be closed and my spirit departed. Do not grieve when I am dead. I am not to be mourned, but only to be forgiven. When you know that I brought you into this world only to suffer and be thrown in the shadow of the world's splendor, do not think hardly of me, but pray to God that my sins be forgiven.

"This is my fondest—saddest—and last—" She embraced the child again and again, then thrust the sword in her throat, gasped, and died.

Kenzero was haunted all night by the thoughts of his sorrow-stricken wife. Next morning, at the close

of his attendance, he hurried to the Sumida. On arriving at the cottage, he found the door closed; he knocked for admission, and he was soon answered by the nurse, who appeared as if just awakened from a deep slumber.

"How is Sumie?" asked Kenzero, eagerly.

"She has not yet called me; so I suppose she has slept soundly," replied the nurse.

"That is well. Sleep does her so much good." And Kenzero went straight to Sumie's chamber. A loud scream was heard. In a minute the nurse and servant were on the spot. What a terrible scene! There was Sumie lying in white apparel covered with blood, the nurse kneeling and weeping, Kenzero holding Sumie's face in both his hands and gazing upon it with an expression of intense agony, and the servant standing dumb with horror.

"Oh, Sumie!" cried Kenzero, still gazing on her face. "My own and dearest! Your sufferings were too heavy to bear; but was there not any other way but to rest in the shadow of death? Were those her last words to me? Oh, how ignorant was I of the working of her heart! My life, my happiness, forever gone!" He trembled with despair and remorse; but he reflected upon her words, and bitterly reproached himself. As he turned about, he found a letter on the desk; on its outside was written, " Farewell letter to

Kenzero." He opened it hurriedly, but, unable to proceed, he dropped it on the floor. On recovering his strength, he read as follows:

"MIDNIGHT ON THE SUMIDA

"DEAREST KENZERO: Parting is a correlative of meeting; no meeting can ever exist but it is followed by parting. As the number of happy meetings increases, so much nearer do we approach to the melancholy of parting. At last the time has come when I must leave you and the world forever. Standing on the threshold of death, as I look back upon my life I see nothing but sadness and misery. In spite of my inferior birth, you have shown me more sympathy and love than was due to my unworthy self; and shall I ever forget them? I have often felt it would have been better and happier for you and me had we never met. I had a dread of myself as the cause of disgrace to you and your noble family. I believe I was intended to die when I was left in my infancy without home and parents. It was never intended that I should thus live and make you grieve for my misery. These thoughts render my life no pleasure to me, but create a constant fear of future sufferings; therefore, now, once for all, I sacrifice my life and end my fears, to save you from disgrace. I have only one request, my worthy— In what term shall I address you now? As a husband.

The world ignores our marriage, and your noble parents have not ratified it. Whatever name it may be, I care not. For the sake of your unfortunate Sumie, have pity on my child, and give him such an education as will save him from ignorance and disgrace.

"Do not tell him who his mother was, or how she died, for it will only add sorrow and shame to his innocent mind; but teach him to pray that her sins be forgiven.

"As I leave all those who are dear to me on earth, and turn my thoughts to the mysterious region of death, I shall tremble at the darkness of my path; but I trust that God will be merciful and guide my poor weary soul to its blessed destiny. This parting —sorrowful and heartrending—will be only for a moment, and soon we shall meet again in a happier land, where sorrows are unknown and friends never parted.

"My thoughts are as countless as the pebbles on the shore; but as an approaching dawn separates day from night, and life from death, so I close this last token of my love with adieus and tears."

As he finished the reading of the letter, Kenzero laid it down, clasped his hands in prayer, and gazed upon it as the last expression of Sumie's love. Every heart was swelled by grief; every eye was filled with tears; silence and sorrow reigned everywhere.

When the family was informed of Sumie's personal history, the parents reproached Kenzero for the concealment of his early betrothal. The grandfather said that if Sumie had told him of her marriage, and of her child, he would have secured the favor of the family in her cause; and Eukie regretted her own existence as an obstacle to Kenzero's union with Sumie, and as the cause of her self-destruction.

Her parents took the child into the family, trusted his education to the loving hands of Eukie, and erected a tomb to the memory of Sumie, young and beautiful, who sacrificed her life for man and his honor.

K. KANEKO.

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